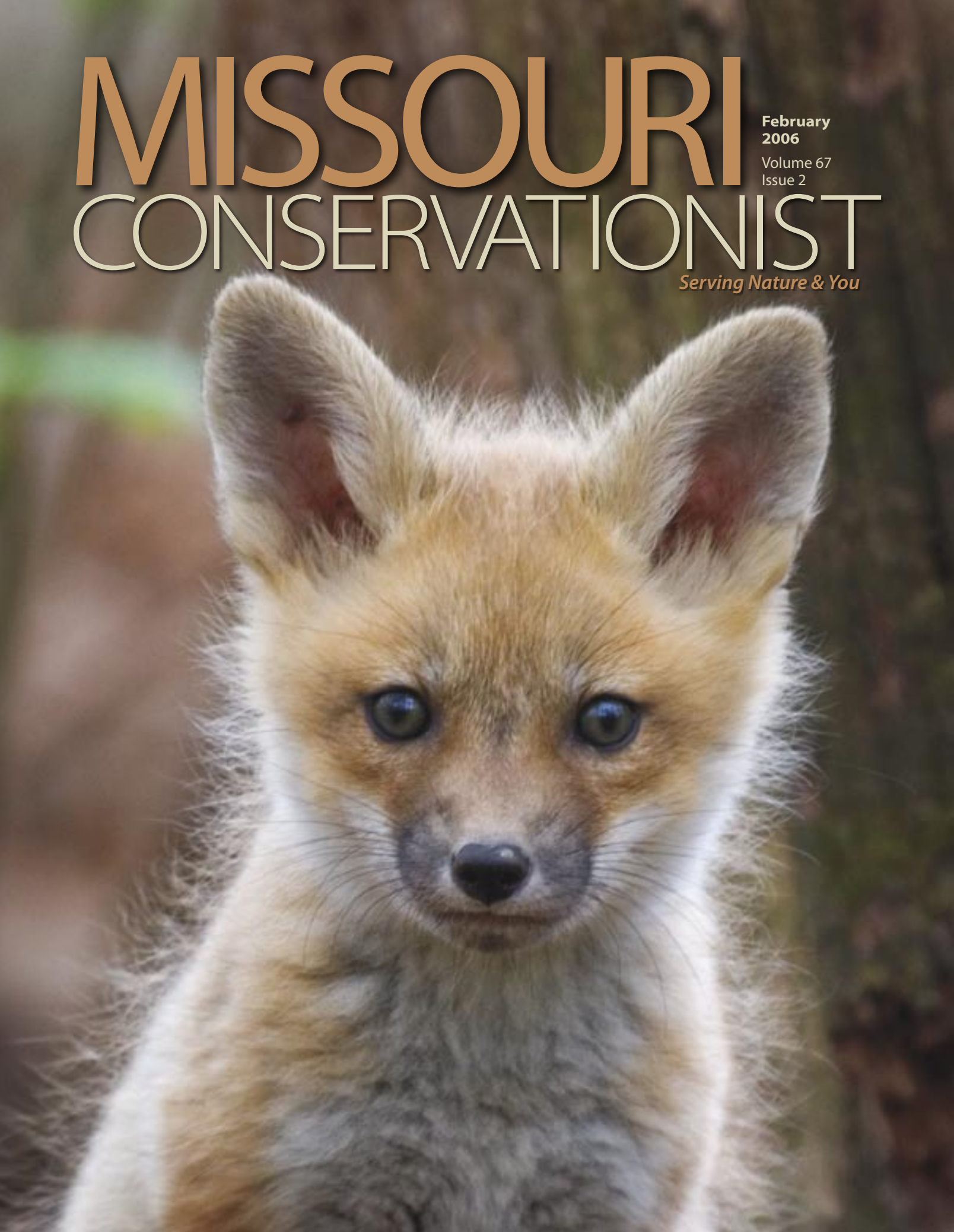


MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

February 2006
Volume 67
Issue 2

Serving Nature & You

Patience and Progress


CLIFF WHITE

My wife and I are "recreational landowners" in the Ozarks, meaning our land is used primarily for family enjoyment, not to produce a living. Three years ago, I used this space to write about our "Bridges Place," 180 acres of remote wild land, a long way from our home.

The Bridges Place was once owned by my father-in-law, Joe Heavin, a skilled and enthusiastic hunter and angler. When Joe passed away, my two sons and I promised to hunt together at least once a year to preserve Joe's passion for the outdoors. The boys are now grown with families of their own, and they also live far from the property. We could find better deer hunting, but we are drawn to this land every fall because it reminds us of Joe and our many adventures.

The three of us are not expert hunters; in fact, we failed to harvest any deer during the last four years. For most of my career, I was a conservation agent who worked long hours during Missouri's fall hunting seasons. Conservation agents are a dedicated lot, and I am proud that I was one of them. However, the demands of the job made family hunting trips with Jay and Jeff a rare treat.

This past season, the boys were determined to break the drought. Two weeks before opening day, we each drove three hours to scout for deer sign. Jeff even hauled his fancy, custom-welded, two-seater tree stand to prove he was serious.

We found enough tracks, trails and buck scrapes to keep our enthusiasm high. After much debate between my sons, they put Jeff's stand where they could see a pond and three of the five small fields. I picked out some sites for my portable climbing tree stand in a nearby wooded area. We had a plan and a mission!

Opening day, we all three claimed our spots. Jeff and Jay climbed in the big tree stand and I perched myself in a tree about a half-mile north. I now really understand why hunters use tree stands. Not only do they provide a much better view of passing deer, the stand is also a great place to watch the squirrels and birds.

My nature watching ended abruptly with a single report of a rifle from the boys' direction. A clean shot from over 150 paces away made Jay the first family member to take a deer from the Bridges Place. Of course, there is the rest of the story—Jay was actually reading a book when the young buck approached and his brother had to alert him to take the shot!

Together, we hauled the deer to the farm house, checked it via Telecheck, and processed it ourselves. We finished the hunting weekend without further success, but it was a great time to be outdoors and enjoy the wildness of the area. Fortunately, Jeff was able to return four days later and harvest his own deer after less than two hours in his fancy stand.

This tale illustrates why being a recreational landowner is important to our family and why we are willing to expend the time, money and effort to take care of the land.

In previous years, we saw few deer and took none, but we made gradual habitat improvements to native grasses and forbs and established green browse plots. The work to convert the old fields took time, still has much room for improvement, and just is not pretty to some. But, the transition is pleasing to watch and deer tracks, trails, shed antlers and scrapes have increased.

We see turkeys occasionally, lots of rabbits and squirrels and a variety of songbirds. We hope for rebounds in the bobwhite quail population in seasons to come. This kind of progress takes time and patience, yet the personal involvement pays rich and immediate personal rewards. Over time, there is also a promise of future memories with children and grandchildren if we stay the course.

Conservation management on private land is a challenge for those who lack the expertise or equipment, but it is critically important to ensuring future wildlife populations. If you need help in achieving conservation goals on your property, Department of Conservation employees are here to serve. Please call us, we would be delighted to help. This service is hugely important to us as conservation professionals and to everyone who cares about the fish, forest and wildlife.

John D. Hoskins, Director

This column is dedicated to my brother, Joe Hoskins (Aug. 16, 1962–Jan. 8, 2006). Joe was a farmer who loved his family, land and its natural resouces as much as I do.—John Hoskins











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Printed on recycled paper with soy ink

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nomoretrash.org

Reflections

ONE MOODY MOCKINGBIRD

My husband and I received the December 2005 *Missouri Conservationist* in our mail today. When I saw the cover with the northern mockingbird, I smiled so big and laughed. It is such a good photo.

The back photo, "Snowcapped," reminds me of the beautiful ice-covered trees my family had on their property when I lived in the country as a child.

Thank you, Jim Rathert, for letting Missourians see your beautiful photography and thank you, MDC, for employing him. All of his photos are fantastic.

Kathy Augustin, St. Louis

The photos by Jim Rathert on the front and back of the December 2005 issue are works of art. The front is also comical. I congratulate Jim on catching just the moment of that mockingbird's ferocious look. It's priceless!

Mary Howard, Lonedell

DOGGONE FRUSTRATING

In your "News & Almanac" section in the December issue, there was an article about "Missouri Law protects dogs." If I understood correctly that you agreed with the judge's decision, then I have to respectfully disagree with both you and the judge.

First, in my opinion, the person has every right to set a trap on his own property for whatever reason he sees fit—especially leg-hold traps as he used. If it had been some kind of death trap, that might have been different.

Second, shouldn't the owner of the dog have the liability for the whereabouts of the animal, not the landowner?

Dennis Finnigan, Hunnewell

WE'RE HONORED

I just wanted to send out a big thank you to the editors and contributors of the *Missouri Conservationist* magazine. It is of a professional quality that rivals even *National Geographic*. And best of all, it's free to residents and about our great home state of Missouri.

Your articles and photos are top notch and interest even those who don't just hunt and fish but enjoy camping and being in the great outdoors. Thanks again for all of your hard work.

Kevin Houseman, Springfield

For months I have wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoy your magazine. It is excellent from front to back. (This 79-year-old even reads *Outside In*!) I always pass it on when finished, but I keep at least two or three months to reread.

Edna Sutherland, St. Louis

LOOKING FOR LARGE PRINT

Do you have a large print edition?

Linda Sparlin, Rolla

Editor's note: The Conservationist *is not available in large print at this time. However, if you would like to take advantage of assistive technology, we encourage you to contact the Missouri Assistive Technology Commission at* www.at.mo.gov. *They can also be reached by telephone at 816/373-5193 (voice), or 816/373-9315 (TTY).*

Your local public library may have computers equipped with text-to-speech software and Internet access as well. Missouri Conservationist *HTML files can be provided on CD-ROM if you do not have Internet service. Call the Conservation Department in Jefferson City at 573/751-4115 for more information.*

The letters printed here reflect readers' opinions about the Conservationist *and its contents. Space limitations prevent us from printing all letters, but we welcome signed comments from our readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.*



ICE SNAKING LESSONS

Mokane rural mail carrier, Jerry Taylor, spotted this "skating" reptile on his route, December 23. His friend, Rhea Horstman, took the photo. Northern water snakes are usually active from early April to October, but a few days this December were unseasonably warm. This species lives in creeks, rivers, sloughs, ponds, lakes and swamps, and is the most common water snake in Missouri.

Ask the Ombudsman



Q: This weekend, I found a Missouri hunting license from 1933. What year did the state of Missouri begin issuing hunting licenses?

A: According to *The First Fifty Years*, Jim Keefe's book on the history of the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Walmsley Law provided for the first hunting permits, which were issued in 1905. They were $1 and 47,746 were sold.

The permit you have predates MDC, which was formed by a citizens' initiative ballot in 1936.

The earliest wildlife laws in Missouri were implemented in St. Louis County in the mid-1800s. These regulations did not help the state's wildlife and fisheries resources, though, because there were no provisions for enforcement. It took almost another 100 years for conservation-minded citizens to vote MDC into existence.

See *www.missouriconservation.org/about/50_yrs/* for more on the Walmsley Law and the history of conservation in Missouri.

Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Conservation Department programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573/522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at Ken.Drenon@mdc.mo.gov.

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17. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete — Shawn Cunningham

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Serving nature and you

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For Feet that Never Leave ASPHALT

Connect with nature at the Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center in Kansas City.

by Robert W. Fluchel
photos by Cliff White

There are children living in Kansas City whose feet never leave asphalt. Imagine, for a moment, that you are one of them.

You live your life within a few square city blocks. Outside, the sounds of traffic fill your ears. You connect with computers, video games and television more than nature. Your ideas about conservation have more to do with picking up litter or recycling than fish, forests and wildlife.

If you are this child, or if you care about the future of this child, you are the reason we built the Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center right in the middle of Kansas City.

The Discovery Center is there to connect the urban person with nature. Visitors can learn new skills that will help them enjoy the outdoors for the rest of their lives.

Current outdoor enthusiasts can share their love of the outdoors as a volunteer. Here is a place to meet lots of other dedicated people who love



The Discovery Center provides 8 acres of opportunity for both children and adults to learn about nature. Visitors can participate in formal workshops or stroll the grounds.

and know the outdoors and who want to help beginners.

A Unique Location

The Discovery Center is located in the heart of Kansas City in Kauffman Legacy Park. It shares the home of one of Missouri's largest charitable foundations: the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, named for the founder of Marion Laboratories and longtime owner of the Kansas City Royals.

The Kauffman Foundation contributes 8 acres of its Kauffman Legacy Park for use as the Urban Conservation Campus of the Discovery Center.

Kauffman Legacy Park connects to many walking routes that link up with the Brush Creek Corridor sidewalks. These, in turn, link several cultural and natural resources, such as Kauffman Memorial Gardens, Volker Park, Nelson-Atkins Art Museum, the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Rockhurst University and Stowers Institute. The Country Club Plaza shops and many fine restaurants are also within walking distance of the Discovery Center.



The Discovery Center is a great place for families. They can take advantage of various activities—from workshops to concerts—offered by the center.

ADULT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Help someone's feet leave asphalt by sharing your time and talent at the Discovery Center. Call 816/759-7300 to apply to be part of our volunteer program.

Hands-on Workshops

Each of these six workshops invites people inside with a department-store style glass front that features its theme. Weekday classes are reserved for school groups. The public is invited to paricipate on weekends.

Nature's Bounty Workshop: Learn how and why we harvest living things from the wild. A unique room combines a demonstration kitchen, a fishing simulator and a Laser Shot hunting simulator.

Older children and adults can whet their appetite for fish, game and wild edibles. How about signing up to learn how to make a pizza with morel mushrooms, ground venison and wild greens?

Nature's Garden Workshop: Develop gardening skills in a greenhouse with planting benches. Learn to grow native trees, shrubs and wildflowers from an expert. Plan a backyard environment that will attract, house and feed songbirds and attract butterflies. Also, learn how to start seeds or plant a rain garden.

Nature's Aquarium Workshop: Experiment with flowing stream models built to scale in a bright laboratory. Learn about fish, fishing and how to sample and collect other aquatic life forms, such as crayfish, frogs and insects. Also, measure water quality by sampling the invertebrates that live in the water.

Exploring the Outdoors Workshop: Watch and identify birds, follow mammal tracks, pitch a tent or use a compass in a room full of basic outdoor equipment that looks like a sporting goods store. What natural area would you like to visit and explore?

Nature's Palette Workshop: Make exquisite leaf prints, take nature photos or build a wooden tree mosaic in a studio full of art media. Appeal to your inner artist by sketching and journaling about nature, just as Lewis and Clark did 200 years ago.

Woodworking for Wildlife Workshop: Construct a bird feeder or wren nest box in a carpentry workshop and practice using basic tools. Participants will take home a product that he or she has built. Enhance the wildlife habitat around your home.

Saturdays for Families, Scouts and Special Events

Saturdays are informal learning days at the Discovery Center. Visitors can either walk in and take advantage of the activities of the day or sign up in advance for classes and workshops listed in our quarterly newsletter.

Special Discovery Days, nature concerts like Fiddles and Forests and a wide variety of community conservation group programs and exhibits are open and free to the public.

Events may focus on such topics as Lewis and Clark or wildlife. The gift shop and teacher resource room offer educational items for parents and teachers who want to combine shopping and browsing with a special event.

Walk the Wild Sidewalk, Grow Native or Go Green

A winding-loop sidewalk will introduce you to gardening for hummingbirds, songbirds and butterflies. Pick up tips along the way on landscaping urban areas with native plants.

Tour a building and grounds that are environmentally friendly, either with a guide or on your own. See geothermal heat pumps, solar power, bioswale retention basins, recycled products and a living machine! See dozens of green design features all in one place.

Coming soon: The Metropolitan Energy Center, in cooperation with the Conservation Department and the Department of Natural Resources, will open a new Project Living Proof Discovery House. It will be adjacent to the Discovery Center and will feature everything homeowners can do to retrofit an existing home for conservation purposes.



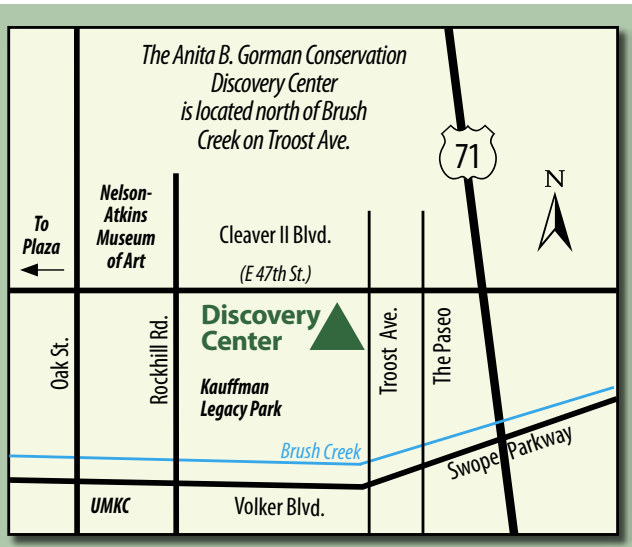
"Nature's Palette," where children make nature-related art, is one of six regularly offered workshops at the center.

Learning, caring and shaping

Reaching city kids is vitally important for conservation. These children will determine the future of forests, fish and wildlife in Missouri. We want them to know and love the natural resources of our state because the quality of all of our lives depends on whether or not citizens care.

The Discovery Center is an urban meeting place where families of various backgrounds can meet and learn together. Here, they can acquire outdoor skills and participate in the outdoors.

The Discovery Center is a place where children whose feet have never left asphalt can learn to build a birdhouse, grow a tree, make a leaf print or dip their hands in a flowing stream. It is a place to watch birds, track mammals, learn about green building design, naturescaping and energy conservation—a place to see conservationists practice what they teach. ▲



Address: Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center
Kauffman Legacy Park, 4750 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64110
Telephone: 816/759-7300
Website: *www.missouriconservation.org/areas/kcmetro/discovery/*
Area Hours: Dawn till dusk, 365 days a year.
Building Hours: 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday; closed on Sundays, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.
Gift Shop and Teacher Resource Room: A beautiful gift shop and teacher resource room offer many educational items.

Workshops help teachers connect conservation to classwork.



EDUCATING the EDUCATORS

by Veronica Feilner
photos by Cliff White



A spring float trip becomes a learning opportunity for these teachers participating in a MDC educator workshop.

Most Missourians say they want their children to learn about conservation in school, and most teachers say they would like to integrate conservation into the subjects they teach.

Teachers know that students love creative, challenging and fun lessons. What better way to make learning more interesting and effective than with outdoor and interpretive activities, materials and experiences?

The Conservation Department's educator workshops specialize in providing teachers and group leaders with the knowledge, experience and resources required to infuse a conservation message into subjects they teach.

The workshops immerse teachers and group leaders in the hands-on, real world of the conservation professional. Participants may spend a day at a local conservation area learning the art of timber management or an afternoon on the river learning aquatic studies.

Each year the Department offers educator workshops on a wide variety of topics. Last year's offerings, for example, included: "Voices from the Ozark Hills," "Nature Journaling," "Comparative Ecology: Invaders vs. Natives," "Animal Adaptations and Behavior" and "Out at Night."

Throughout each workshop, participants learn the answer to the question every educator dreads: "Why do I need to know this?"

Conservation workshops clearly demonstrate how academic concepts and the real world are connected. Educators can then explain to their students why foresters need to understand weather, and why biologists need a background in math.

The three-day "Voices from the Ozark Hills" workshop, for example, demonstrated how the presence of the Grandin Mill, known as the "Big Mill," changed the physical and cultural geography of Shannon County.

These are only a few of the many workshops offered. Some workshops are open for statewide enrollment, while others target a specific region, county or school district. Workshops can even be designed to meet a group's specific needs.



The hallmark of MDC teacher education is hands-on learning, with activities that are fun and challenging.



Teachers become students and learn to relate real-world conservation with academic concepts at MDC workshops.

Teachers and leaders of a variety of groups and disciplines are eligible to attend educator workshops. We've had physical education, science, art and elementary education teachers at our workshops, as well as Scout leaders and the leaders of Stream Team, 4-H and FFA groups.

As one participant remarked, "The workshop was great fun; the staff was knowledgeable; and I loved how it taught so many interdisciplinary objectives."

Many workshops are conducted in cooperation with colleges and universities for undergraduate or graduate credit hours. Participants are required to pay the necessary fees to the university for the college credit. Other workshops are free or are offered at a low cost.

For complete information on current educator workshops, visit *www.missouriconservation.org/teacher/development.htm* or contact a nearby Conservation Department office. ▲

red fox

PORTRAIT *of a* PREDATOR

Not just a pretty face, the red fox fills an important role in Missouri.

BY NICHOLE LECLAIR

PHOTOS BY JIM RATHERT







The red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is considered the most widely distributed carnivore in the world, and is found throughout Missouri. Readily identified by its golden-red coat, black "socks" and white-tipped tail, this sprightly member of the dog family rewards careful observers in both urban and rural locales with a glimpse into the wildness of our state.

An important furbearer and game species, the red fox is sought by trappers, predator callers and hunters. Farmers also benefit from the fox's diet of crop-damaging species, such as rodents, rabbits and grasshoppers. However, few animals prey on the red fox. Known to sometimes pursue smaller domestic stock and game birds, and able to adapt to almost any habitat, it can become a nuisance.

Managing the size of Missouri's red fox population helps magnify the positive role of this mid-sized predator, while minimizing its nuisance potential. The Department of Conservation monitors red fox populations closely in order to set hunting and trapping seasons, track outbreaks of disease, and develop control programs for communities and private landowners.

COAT OF MANY COLORS

Not all red foxes are red. Members of this species may be red, white, silver (black frosted with white) or cross (reddish brown with a black band down the back and across the shoulders). The color "morph" that shows up depends on location and genetics. All share the distinctive white-tipped tail, and usually a patch of white under the chin.

Nearly all red foxes in Missouri have red coats, but cross foxes have occasionally been found. Males and females are colored similarly and young foxes are gray and brown.



Above: The female warily returns to her den, watchful for predators. Left: A pup gorges on a cottontail rabbit left by its mother. By 20 weeks of age, it will hunt for itself.

STANDARD STATISTICS

Red foxes generally weigh between 8 and 15 pounds, with males slightly heavier than females. Their thick coats, especially in winter, can give the impression of greater size.

Home ranges are 50 to 1,500 acres, depending on habitat. Fox territories do not overlap and are defended aggressively.

Though red foxes may live 6 to 10 years in the wild, most have significantly shorter life spans. However, some individuals have lived as long as 15 years in captivity.

DINNER'S WHAT YOU MAKE IT

Primarily a carnivore, the red fox pursues rabbits, rodents and other small mammals, which helps regulate those populations. Excellent sight, hearing and sense of smell allow it to track the smallest burrowing prey. It will also hunt ground-nesting birds—including ducks, grouse and quail. Poultry and smaller livestock are occasionally taken.

Mainly nocturnal, but often active at dawn and dusk, the red fox is a solitary hunter. It quietly stalks its prey and then pounces on it—behavior more familiar in cats than dogs. Up to a pound of meat is eaten at each feeding.

Red foxes also consume reptiles, fish, insects, earthworms, eggs, plant material, pet food, carrion, human garbage and other items when available. This flexibility of diet makes life in the city an easy transition.

COUNTRY FOX, CITY FOX

Forest edges, fields and cropland are some of the traditional habitats of the red fox. Urban areas, such as golf courses, parks and lawns offer similar amenities—with



Above: The mother guards her den from a distance. She will move the pups if threatened. Right: The pups begin eating solid food around 5 weeks of age, but their mother will continue to nurse them until they're 8 to 10 weeks old.





Through play, red fox pups learn social behavior and hunting skills. The competition for dominance begins at birth.

the additional benefit of fewer coyotes and bobcats. Foxes compete with these two predators for habitat and prey in the wild, and they may become their prey.

Dens are only used for rearing young, so the red fox is very mobile. It simply curls up in a convenient location to rest, tucking nose and feet under its tail in cooler weather.

The red fox population has declined in Missouri over the last three decades. However, as habitats are fragmented into smaller parcels and cities edge closer to natural areas, more foxes will probably head for town.

FAMILY TIME

Red foxes yap, bark, yell, yowl or screech throughout the year, but they use a particular pattern from January through February, when they search for mates. Females give a shrill squall, which is answered by the males with two or three short barks.

Though solitary throughout fall and early winter, the pair will live together while raising their young. They will take turns at hunting and protecting the pups.

The female modifies an existing den—from a woodchuck or other animal—for her own, or she builds anew. The site might be a sunny hillside, the edge of a forest or field, a rock crevice, or under an old building.

Den layout includes multiple entrances and a long burrow up to 75 feet, which contains one or more chambers. One of these will be grass-lined for the pups. Alternate, less elaborate dens are built nearby, in case the pups must be moved to avoid danger.

Gestation takes an average of 53 days, and a single annual litter, usually 4–7 pups, is born in March or April. The young are helpless and remain in the den until they are 4 or 5 weeks old. By 20 weeks of age, they can hunt for themselves but remain within a half-mile of the den site.

The pups disperse in the fall, traveling an average of 6–14 miles. They are capable of reproducing in the spring following their birth.

The red fox is a notoriously elusive species, but it is well-established here in Missouri. With careful management, it will continue to satisfy the curiosity of naturalists, provide plentiful sporting opportunities and fulfill a beneficial role in our natural communities. ▲


JIM RATHERT


CLIFF WHITE


JIM RATHERT

MDC Wildlife Damage Biologist James Dixon inspects a boat dock with beaver damage (center). Besides beavers, many animals, such as geese and deer, can cause problems.

Damage Control

Department biologists specialize in identifying and managing nuisance wildlife. by Rex Martensen

Jim Braithwait pulls into the driveway of a landowner who had complained of deer eating his crops.

"I hope you brought your checkbook," quips the landowner, as Braithwait exits his truck. "Your deer are destroying my sweet corn!"

This type of welcome is not uncommon for Braithwait. He's a wildlife damage biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation, and reducing or eliminating wildlife damage issues is his specialty.

He accompanies the frustrated landowner to the 7-acre sweet corn patch and explains that the state's deer do not "belong" to the Department of Conservation, but to each individual of the state. Compensation for damage would not be a wise use of taxpayers' dollars because it would not solve the problem.

Surveying the damage, it becomes clear that raccoons are the corn-eating culprits—not deer. Braithwait explains the differences in deer versus raccoon damage and recommends that a low-strung electric fence be installed. The fence is fairly inexpensive compared to the potential profits from the sweet corn.

Missouri is blessed with an abundance of wildlife, and most citizens enjoy interacting with it, whether by hunting, photographing or simply watching. That blessing, however, can become a curse when the animals we normally enjoy become a nuisance or cause damage to our personal property.

Emotions may run the gamut from aggravation to outright anger when a nuisance turns to damage. Knowing what to do about it can be equally frustrating.

NUISANCE vs. DAMAGE

Wildlife complaints fall into the nuisance animal category when an animal comes in conflict with a person's view of when and where that animal should be.

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General assistance is available by calling local Conservation offices. Personnel there can provide valuable information and resources for alleviating particular problems. Brochures are also available on our Website at *www.missouriconservation.org/landown/wild/nuisance*. Conservation agents are specially trained and experienced in handling more complicated nuisance issues.



CLIFF WHITE

If other remedies have been exhausted, the best way to deal with a problem animal may be to trap and remove it.

The most common approaches for controlling nuisance wildlife include removal of the attraction, exclusion and removal of the animal.

For example, simple solutions for a nuisance raccoon might include removing attractants such as garbage or pet food, repairing or filling openings around structures and/or trapping (with a cage-type live trap) and removing the offending animal. Sporting goods stores, lawn and garden supply stores and farm equipment supply stores often carry nuisance control equipment. The Wildlife Code of Missouri allows for property owners to control nuisance wildlife that cause damage.

When wildlife conflicts become more than a nuisance and involve property damages and financial losses, special steps must be taken.

Damage may depend on the individual's perception. A groundhog digging under the porch or feeding on flowers may constitute damage from one point of view. Others may view that as a minor issue compared to a coyote that has developed a taste for calves or an otter that has discovered a smorgasbord in a commercial hatchery pond.

DAMAGE MANAGEMENT

Private Land Services Division is responsible for the Wildlife Damage Management Program, which assists Missourians with substantial damage and financial losses due to wildlife.

The program is staffed by six wildlife damage biologists and a central office supervisor who are specialists in identifying and alleviating wildlife damage issues. The program depends on a variety of methods, including habitat management, animal husbandry, repellents, traps and scare tactics, as well as lethal control tactics.

HISTORY

Wildlife damage problems are not new to Missouri. In 1923, Missouri hired six government trappers to remove problem animals.

Most of the damage complaints received during this time period centered on the growing coyote population in Missouri. The idea was to refer trappers to individuals suffering predation problems to trap and eliminate the offending animals. This approach proved to be too time consuming, and the trappers could not respond to complaints in a timely manner.

An extension-type predator control program began in 1945, employing two predator control agents. These agents traveled throughout the state training landowners on how to remove offending predators.

This approach proved much more effective because



CLIFF WHITE

When a beaver caused significant damage at a public lake, St. Louis County Parks called Damage Biologist Tom Meister.

landowners could trap predators on their own as soon as they caused damage. The special training also allowed landowners to prevent future losses.

TODAY'S WILDLIFE DAMAGE BIOLOGIST

Today the Missouri Department of Conservation's Wildlife Damage Management program continues to use the extension service approach.

The state is divided into three urban districts (Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield) and three rural districts (north, south and central) to best serve citizens.

The role and duties of the wildlife damage biologist have changed over the years. Once known simply as "state trappers," they now lead public conservation programs, conduct training for Department employees, assist with special projects and act as media contacts, in addition to training landowners and trapping nuisance wildlife.

Coyotes still account for some of the damage complaints that biologists receive. However, since wildlife populations in general have increased over the years, several other species have been added to the list. Otters, beavers, geese, deer and even bears now challenge the skills of wildlife damage biologists.



JIM RATHERT

The key to controlling otters is to head off problems before they start by recognizing signs of their presence.

OTTERS AND BEAVERS

"Otters adapted to Missouri's landscape much better than originally thought," says Braithwait, based in Camdenton. "When a group of otters finds a hatchery pond, the losses can be extensive."

Setting Conibear-type traps or underwater snares can be very effective when specific travel lanes can be identified. Shooting otters, where safe, can also eliminate the problem.

A non-lethal method available to pond owners is placing a low-set electric fence around the pond perimeter. This fencing can be an economical approach for protecting fish stocking investments.

"Otters move around a lot," says Braithwait. "You have to get right on otter damage before it's too late."

Identifying otter sign is the key to early detection of otter damage. Otters will pull fish up on the bank to feed and leave the skeleton when finished. Otters also love crayfish. Consequently, their scat (feces) will normally contain large quantities of crayfish shells.

Beavers are another aquatic animal that frequently cause damage. Most complaints involve trees being chewed or cut down. After all, that is what beavers do. However, if those trees cost several hundred dollars and were planted for shade or aesthetics, then something must be done.

Most control methods used for otters are also effective for beavers. To protect individual trees, property owners can wrap tree trunks with wire or plastic piping at least four feet high.

More serious problems occur when beavers clog city water supply outlets or dam water drainage systems, causing crop fields to flood. Usually, a short training session and initial trap setting with city employees or the landowner rectifies these problems.

COYOTES

Coyotes continue to cause occasional problems for farmers trying to raise cattle or sheep. Losses can get serious if the offending animal is not identified and stopped in a timely manner.

"Cattle farmers keep pretty close track of their calf crop," says Scott McWilliams, biologist, West Plains. "After losing a calf or two, they're anxious to catch the coyote."

Very often though, the culprit is not a coyote at all, but free-running domestic dogs. Biologists can distinguish between coyote damage and damage caused by dogs. The ability to accurately interpret animal sign becomes extremely important in these cases.

If the culprit is in fact a coyote, it is caught by snare or foothold trap. Snares are inexpensive, easy to set and very effective. A special permit is required to set snares and can only be issued by a wildlife damage biologist.

Research shows that livestock predation by coyotes is usually the work of one individual animal. By targeting and killing the offending coyote, the predation stops and no further animals must be trapped.

"For lawn plantings and gardens, property owners may try electric fencing, repellents or scare tactics to discourage deer. These tactics usually keep the damage to an acceptable level or can eliminate it altogether."—*Wendy Sangster*


JIM RATHERT


CLIFF WHITE

The best way to minimize damage caused by deer is to control the population through the harvest of does. Sometimes, however, when deer do significant damage to crops or landscaping (above) a damage biologist may recommend other steps.

CLIFF WHITE



JIM RATHERT

Simple measures, such as reinforcing the mesh around a chicken pen (top), will often take care of problems caused by coyotes (above) and other predators.

DEER

Managing Missouri's white-tailed deer population is one of the Department's greatest challenges. Although hunters may be largely satisfied with the condition of Missouri's deer herd, others are not so quick to applaud this abundant resource.

Most folks accept and can tolerate a certain amount of damage caused by deer. Crop farmers, landscapers and gardeners all expect and anticipate some losses due to natural causes, such as wildlife, insects and different types of weather events. However, when losses are excessive, then control methods may be in order.

Wildlife damage biologists often handle deer damage issues whether the complaint involves a lawn and garden or an 80-acre soybean field.

"For lawn plantings and gardens, property owners may try electric fencing, repellents or scare tactics to discourage deer," says Wendy Sangster, biologist, Kansas City. "These tactics usually keep the damage to an acceptable level or can eliminate it altogether."

In rural areas where crop damage can be a problem, biologists often initiate a hunting program that targets does.

"Reducing the doe herd is the key to controlling whitetail deer numbers in a given area. Deer seasons and permits are liberal now, especially for landowners," says Daryl Damron, biologist, Moberly. "Many landowners have significantly reduced their crop damage losses by maintaining an active deer harvest program during the established seasons."

When crop damage is excessive or deer numbers can't be controlled through regular hunting seasons, then a special restricted permit may be issued by a conservation agent to reduce deer numbers.

GEESE

Another species that has found great success in Missouri is the giant Canada goose. Once thought to have been eliminated from the state, this bird is now a very common sight—too common, according to some.

"Canada geese make up the bulk of my calls in the spring and early summer," says Tom Meister, biologist, St. Louis. "People all over St. Louis complain about the droppings on sidewalks, playgrounds and beach areas. Some nesting pairs of geese can even become aggressive and chase people who get too close to a nest. It's just unacceptable if you are trying to run a business and the geese are chasing your customers."

"Most towns and municipalities have inadvertently created the perfect situation for geese when they constructed golf courses and city parks." —*Tom Meister*



JIM RATHERT

Damage biologists spend much of their time in spring and early summer dealing with nuisance geese.

"Geese are attracted to bodies of water that have trimmed, green grass and a gentle slope to the water's edge," says Meister. "Most towns and municipalities have inadvertently created the perfect situation for geese when they constructed golf courses and city parks."

Advance planning during construction can help keep geese from being attracted to a lake in the first place. But if geese are already creating a problem, there is still hope.

"Goose control techniques must be carried out consistently over time to have the desired effects," says Sangster. "No single technique may work on its own. A well-executed abatement program implementing several techniques, including habitat manipulation, chemical control, harassment (including trained dogs), and egg and nest destruction, is critical to controlling giant Canada geese. If these techniques fail, a roundup and removal may be recommended."

A special permit is required to disturb eggs and nests or kill the geese out of season.

BEARS

Black bears are becoming more common in Missouri and human conflict is inevitable. We receive several bear complaints each year. Bears get into trash dumpsters and they damage beehives. Less common for black bears is to prey on livestock.

"Bears are highly responsive to harassment techniques and electric fences," says James Dixon, biologist, Springfield. "Most problems can be corrected by keeping food items out of reach and stringing electric fence around whatever you don't want the bears getting into."

Black bears are usually not aggressive but can be attracted to unnatural food sources like trash receptacles, campgrounds and even bird feeders. Keeping a clean camp and using trash containers with good, secure lids will prevent most problems.

"Black bears, as a rule, generally don't cause problems," says McWilliams. "Most of the bears that I deal with get into trouble when they are being fed. By feeding a bear, people may be unknowingly contributing to its death if it becomes a nuisance and has to be destroyed. Remember, 'A fed bear is a dead bear.'"

Wildlife damage biologists may have to trap and relocate a bear if harassment techniques don't work.

MOUNTAIN LIONS

Mountain lions always cause quite a stir and are the subject of many coffee shop conversations.

The Department receives dozens of mountain lion sighting reports monthly but has only been able to confirm the presence of seven free-roaming mountain lions


JIM RATHERT

While they get much attention, mountain lions are rare in Missouri. This road-kill is one of only a few confirmed sightings.

in Missouri over the last 10 years. Where these mountain lions came from also makes for interesting discussions.

Since there are no fences around the state, nothing is stopping a wild mountain lion from wandering into Missouri from an existing population outside of the state. The nearest known populations of mountain lions occur in Colorado, South Dakota and Texas.

Another possibility is that captive mountain lions are occasionally released or are escaping captivity. Missouri requires a special permit to possess a mountain lion and strict confinement standards must be met. There are currently about 30 people in the state who have a permit to keep them, and an unknown number of people may possess them illegally.

One thing is sure—the Department has not reintroduced mountain lions. The Missouri Department of Conservation (or any other state or federal agency) has never released, bought, sold, traded, tagged, radio collared or microchipped any mountain lions in Missouri, nor do we have any plans to do so in the future.

In response to the few cats that have been confirmed and the number of reports that are generated, the wildlife damage biologists have been trained to detect and analyze mountain lion sign and damage.

"One thing that I learned about mountain lions is that if one is in the area, it will leave sign and plenty of it," says Braithwait, who has trained in both Wyoming and Florida.

Most on-site investigations verify that coyotes, foxes, bobcats, deer and dogs are often mistakenly identified as mountain lions.

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

With some tolerance, common sense and a little help, most of us can weather the minor inconveniences that wildlife may cause and more thoroughly enjoy the benefits that it offers. Missouri's Wildlife Damage Management program, and the capable staff that keep it running, will help ensure that your experiences with wildlife are positive ones. ▲

Wildlife CODE CHANGES

2006 regulation changes provide more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors

by John Smith, regulations committee chairman

Every year, the Conservation Department's regulations committee reads hundreds of letters and e-mail messages from Missouri's hunters, trappers, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts who have suggestions or complaints about wildlife management or regulations. Each year, the committee members also look at hunting and fishing surveys and opinion polls from Missourians across the state. We then seek the expert opinion of the Department's research biologists and managers to learn how Missouri's natural resources are faring under current regulations.



CLIFF WHITE

The new Fur Handler's Permit gives trappers 52 more days to sell their furs.

Out of this process comes recommendations to the director and the conservation commission on changes to next year's *Wildlife Code of Missouri.* These regulations are established to manage Missouri's valuable plant and animal communities, to provide equal opportunity to share and enjoy these resources, and to promote public safety.

Following is a summary of regulation changes that go into effect March 1, 2006, unless otherwise noted. Because regulations on Department lands are set to protect wildlife and to provide access to the public, they may change throughout the year, especially after the fall deer, turkey and waterfowl regulations are established. It's always a good idea to get a current list of regulations before traveling to hunt or fish on a Department area, especially during the fall deer and turkey seasons.





CLIFF WHITE

Fishing, hunting and trapping opportunities expand in 2006.

FISHING

- On the Salt River, longbow fishing will now be allowed from the no-boating zone (1,100 feet below the Reregulation Dam) to Route A, which was formerly open to pole-and-line fishing only. This change allows bowfishers greater opportunity to take nongame fish, especially exotic Asian carp that often congregate in this area.
- For many years, fisheries staff have been working with neighboring states to establish reciprocal fishing agreements in waters that share boundaries with Missouri. Anglers possessing either Missouri or Iowa fishing permits now can fish throughout the shared waters of the Des Moines River that form a boundary between the two states. However, if anglers want to fish from or attach equipment to land, they must have a permit from the state that land is in.



CLIFF WHITE

Kansas City anglers will now be able to harvest trout at Coot Lake.

- As part of the Department's statewide catfish management plan, the daily limit on blue catfish has been reduced to five to allow more of this long-lived species to reach large sizes as they once did in Missouri. Increased encounters with large catfish for anglers is one of the goals.
- About two-thirds of the fishing at Wappapello Lake is for crappie, and anglers petitioned the Department to improve this fishery. After a detailed study showed that less than 21 percent of the crappie were reaching 9 inches, the minimum length limit has now been changed to 9 inches. The new length limit should result in higher numbers of larger crappie and an improved crappie fishery without reducing the daily limit. Of the anglers surveyed, 69 percent said they preferred this approach.
- Hickory Creek from the Highway 86 bridge to its confluence with Shoal Creek in Newton County will now be a White Ribbon Trout Area, which provides more opportunities for catching trout and the occasional chance to harvest a large trout. During the catch-and-release trout season, from Nov. 1 through the last day in February, only artificial lures and flies may be used to reduce hooking mortality.
- Maramec Spring Park will now be open daily during the catch-and-release trout season from the second Friday in November through the second Sunday in February. Only flies may be used, and anglers must have a trout permit. This area was previously open three days a week.
- An addition to the winter trout fishing program will be Kiwanis Lake in Mexico, which will have catch-and-release trout fishing from Nov. 1 through Jan. 31, when only flies, artificial lures and soft unscented plastic baits may be used.
- Coot Lake at the James A. Reed Memorial Wildlife Area near Kansas City formerly was a catch-and-release winter trout area. Since this is the only disabled-accessible lake stocked with trout in the Kansas City area, the harvest opportunities for these anglers were limited. Starting next winter, the catch-and-release rule will be removed and trout will continue be stocked, which will allow more winter harvest for all anglers.

HUNTING

- In addition to using .22-caliber rimfire firearms, bullfrogs and green frogs may now be hunted with other smaller rimfire rifles or pistols, and they may be possessed throughout the year. However, only the daily limit may be possessed while hunting.
- Hunters can once again use dogs to hunt for furbearers, squirrels and rabbits during the daylight hours of the November portion of the firearms deer season in Bollinger County. This hunting method continues to be restricted in counties where illegal deer-dogging activities continue to be a significant problem. Note: During this portion, small game hunters are restricted to using a shotgun with shot not larger than No. 4 or using a firearm that fires a rimfire cartridge .22 caliber or smaller.
- Because conservation areas were established for use by the general public, commercial use is not allowed. Therefore, guiding hunting parties for pay is prohibited on these public areas.

Hunters in Bollinger County can once again use dogs to hunt rabbits, squirrels and furbearers during the daylight hours of the November portion of the firearms deer season.

- The Stockton Lake Waterfowl Refuge has been reduced from 1,490 acres to 758 acres. The former refuge acres are uplands, which will provide hunting opportunities for deer, rabbit, quail, squirrel and fall turkey. Quail management will be emphasized. Research at other areas shows that upland hunting near a refuge will not greatly impact the waterfowl that gather there.

TRAPPING

- As with other trapping permits, Resident Cable Restraint Permits are now valid through April 10. This allows trappers to complete an entire trapping season using cable restraints without having to purchase the next year's permit.
- To keep others from interfering with legally set traps, wildlife held in traps, snares or cable restraint devices may only be killed or removed by the person who set the traps.
- Because nutria have extended their range into southeastern Missouri and are often considered a nuisance animal, they can now be trapped during the entire trapping season from Nov. 15 through March 31.
- The rabbit trapping season has been extended from Nov. 15 to Feb. 15 so it will be concurrent with the primary trapping season for furbearers.
- To allow trappers and hunters more opportunities to sell their furs at national and international auctions, the new Fur Handler's Permit allows them to possess, process, transport and ship legally taken pelts from March 2 through June 1. The pelts must have been taken by the holder of the permit; and if sold within Missouri to a fur dealer, the pelts must be fleshed, stretched and dried.



To keep others from interfering with legally set traps, only the person who set the trap may remove captured animals.

Safety issues are always a concern when setting regulations.

▲ Technology is developing that allows people to shoot wildlife via the Internet with the use of remote cameras. After the animal is located on the computer screen, a remote control would allow the people sitting in front of a computer screen in another location or even another state or country to aim and fire a gun at the animal. Because computer-assisted remote hunting violates the concept of fair chase for wildlife and creates safety concerns for people, Missouri is joining several other states in banning this practice.

Changes to improve and protect wildlife populations and habitat.

▲ Long Branch Lake has a new daily limit of four and a length limit of 20 inches for white, yellow and striped bass and their hybrids. The 2,429-acre lake in Macon County was recently stocked with hybrid striped bass to increase predation on overabundant gizzard shad and crappie. The new length limit will allow the stocked fish to become large enough to prey on adult shad and help establish a hybrid striped bass population.

▲ Non-native goldfish and bighead, common, grass and silver carp of any length may now be taken for use as live bait.

▲ To help other states keep unwanted species out of their waters and to stop the illegal commercialization of native species from Missouri waters, anglers are not allowed to transport or sell native species taken in Missouri as live bait in other states.

▲ To minimize negative impacts to invertebrates listed in the Missouri Species and Communities of Conservation Concern Checklist, a Wildlife Collector's Permit must be obtained to collect or possess these species. The checklist is available online.


JIM RATHERT

Grass carp and other non-native carp of any length may be used as live bait.

▲ Mussels listed as species of conservation concern in the *Wildlife Code* are protected. The list of species is available online.


JIM RATHERT

Commercial harvest restrictions on shovelnose sturgeon have been expanded to the Mississippi River.

▲ To protect public safety, help control the spread of wildlife diseases and prevent the proliferation of non-native species in the wild, escaped animals from big game hunting preserves and from holders of Class I wildlife breeder permits must be reported immediately to the Department.

▲ Because sturgeon fisheries in Missouri have been under increased harvest pressure due to the demand for caviar, the commercial harvest restrictions imposed upon the Missouri River will now be expanded to the Mississippi River. In portions defined as commercial waters, shovelnose sturgeon that measure 24 to 32 inches may be taken from Oct. 15 through May 15 by holders of a Resident Shovelnose Sturgeon Commercial Harvest Permit or Nonresident Mississippi River Shovelnose Sturgeon Commercial Harvest Permit. Shovelnose sturgeon smaller than 24 inches and larger than 32 inches must be released unharmed. Bordering states are working with the Department to protect this fish species and standardize regulations. As a result, fishermen who possess a valid commercial permit to harvest shovelnose sturgeon issued by Illinois or Tennessee may harvest shovelnose sturgeon from the Missouri portion of the Mississippi River without further permit or license.



The elephant-ear mussel, along with other species of conservation concern, are protected.

Other changes clarify the intent of existing regulations.

- If a mountain lion, which is protected in Missouri, is killed by a person who is protecting property, the intact carcass, including pelt, must be surrendered to an agent of the Department within 24 hours. This wording was changed to show that the pelt along with the carcass must be surrendered.
- The experimental catfish hand-fishing season will continue this year, but several items were added to the regulation to clarify allowable methods. Only feet and bare hands may be used without the aid of hooks, snorkeling or SCUBA equipment, or other man-made devices. Hand fishers may not possess fishing equipment, except a stringer, while on designated hand fishing waters or adjacent banks. Stringers may not be used as an aid for taking catfish, and may not be used until the fish is in possession at or above the surface of the water. Natural sticks may be used to locate catfish, but may not be used as an aid for taking fish. Catfish taken by hand-fishing methods may not be possessed on waters closed to hand fishing. Also, every hand fisher must keep an up-to-date, accurate record showing the date, waters fished, length, weight, species and sex of catfish caught or taken and other biological data as listed on the form furnished by the Department.
- Crayfish traps, as well as other live-bait trapping methods, may be used to take live bait. All traps used to take live bait must be labeled with the angler's full name and address, and must be attended every 24 hours.

A complete list of regulations is available online at *www.sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/3csr.asp*. A printed version of the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* is available at permit vendors. Area regulations and maps are available at *www.missouriconservation.org* and at Conservation Department regional offices.



MASTER WILDLIFER TRAINING

Maybe you have always dreamed of creating your own deer, turkey or quail hunting paradise. Or, perhaps you always wanted to have all the songbirds in your area flock to your land. If you have an entrepreneurial nature, you might have visions of making your property a destination for paying hunters or nature photographers. Whatever your ambitions for your land, you will want to check out the series of eight workshops to be offered in the Master Wildlifer program starting Feb. 28.

The program is a cooperative effort between the Conservation Department, the University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri University School of Natural Resources. It offers participants the chance to learn how to manage land for different wildlife species or landscape types, such as wetlands, ponds or forests. In this way, the agencies hope to encourage greater citizen participation and increase wildlife diversity on private land, which makes up 93 percent of the state's land area.

The first session covers basic wildlife management principles. The following classes deal with different wildlife species' management needs, such as creating ideal habitat for quail and turkey, managing ponds and streams for better aquatic species habitat and managing for furbearing animals.

The classes will be offered via interactive television (ITV) at locations throughout the state, so no one need travel outside their home region to take part. Those who attend at least seven of the eight sessions will earn the title "Master Wildlifer."

The classes will be offered Feb. 28, March 2, March 7, March 9, March 14, March 16, March 21 and March 23. Contact Extension offices where the ITV broadcast will be shown to inquire about fees and enrollment:

- ▲ Reeds Spring, Mo.; 417/272-8707
- ▲ Carrollton, Mo.; 660/542-1792
- ▲ Salem, Mo.; 573/729-8163
- ▲ Nevada, Mo.; 417/448-1212
- ▲ Kirksville, Mo.; 660/785-2530
- ▲ Cape Girardeau/Jackson, Mo.; 573/243-3581
- ▲ Columbia, Mo.; 573/445-9792
- ▲ St. Joseph, Mo.; 816/279-6064

For more information on the program and topics, contact Bob Pierce, 573/882-4337, *piercer@missouri.edu* or Matt Seek, 573/522-4115, ext. 3288, *Matt.Seek@mdc.mo.gov.*

Eagles return to wild at State Capitol

Conservation Department Director John Hoskins, left, joined World Bird Sanctuary (WBS) Director Walter Crawford, center, and Department of Natural Resources Director Doyle Childers at the State Capitol Dec. 2 to release two wild bald eagles. The birds had suffered gunshot wounds and were nursed back to health at the WBS in St. Louis County.

Once rare in Missouri, bald eagles have staged a remarkable recovery, thanks to government and private restoration efforts. The WBS rehabilitates more than 300 indigenous birds of prey annually. Further information is available by calling 636/861-3225, or visiting *www.worldbirdsanctuary.org*.



Deer Classic March 4–5

The 19th Annual Missouri Deer Classic will be held March 4 and 5 at the Boone County Fairgrounds. Brenda Valentine and Larry Shockey will present seminars Saturday and Sunday, and Bass Pro Shops' "King of Bucks" trailer will be on display all weekend.

Visitors can bring deer antlers to be officially scored for Boone and Crockett, Pope and Young, Archery Big Bucks of Missouri and Missouri Show-Me Big Bucks. Scorers from Buckmasters, Safari Club International, Longhunter Society and the North American Shed Hunters Club also will be on hand to score antlers.

Other attractions include a taxidermy display, a children's archery range, laser shot booth and air rifle range, plus more than 200 hunting equipment vendors.

Admission is $6. Children 9 and under are free. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. For more information, visit *www.missourideerclassic.com* or call 573/796-2066.



10th Vulture Venture Feb. 25

Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery's Vulture Venture, proclaimed the nation's best interpretive program by the National Association for Interpreters, will observe its 10th anniversary Feb. 25. The event runs from noon to 6 p.m. and celebrates the many strange and wonderful facets of vulture life.

Visitors will have a chance to view one of Missouri's largest vulture concentrations through telescopes at the Branson facility. This is a rare opportunity to see both black and turkey vultures in the same location. Late in the afternoon, they can watch as large numbers of vultures swoop down to roost for the night.

Indoor attractions include a live vulture, a video about vultures, vulture games, stickers and crafts. This is a free program and requires no reservations. For more information or directions, call 417/334-4865, ext. 0.

Register by March 1 for youth chukar hunt

Hunters between the ages of 11 and 15 will have an opportunity to take part in a chukar and quail hunt and clinic sponsored by the Truman Lake Chapter of Quail Unlimited, Sharp Brothers Seed Company, and the Show-Me Vizsla Club of Kansas City. The event will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 19 at Clear Fork Hunting Preserve, 321 NE 671, Warrensburg. Registration is $15 per hunter. Participants must be hunter-education certified and be accompanied by adult sponsors. The registration deadline is March 1. For more information, e-mail *everedi@interlinc.net*, or call 417/644-7425.

2005 FIREARMS DEER SEASON FINAL TALLY

Missouri hunters closed out the 2005 firearms deer season with a final tally of 249,755 deer, the third-largest deer harvest in modern history. This includes the urban, youth, November, muzzleloader and antlerless segments of the season, totaling 36 days. The 2005 harvest was down 9.3 percent from last year's record of 275,329. Biologists attribute the decrease largely to an abundant acorn crop that kept deer scattered and relatively inactive. Poor hunting weather also played a role. Furthermore, deer numbers finally are declining in some areas as the strategy of increased doe harvest takes hold. This will help decrease deer problems, such as collisions with cars and damage to crops.



Conservation Contractor Workshops

If you have ever wished you had a job working outdoors with wildlife, you might be interested in the Conservation Contractor workshops in February and March. The Conservation Department and the Missouri Agriculture Industries (MO-AG) developed the workshops to fill the need for competent wildlife management work on private land.

Many people want to encourage wildlife on their land, but lack the time or equipment to do the work themselves. Others would like to do the work for pay, but lack the necessary knowledge and experience. The workshops are designed to create a pool of competent contractors for such work.

Training is open to individuals, organizations and businesses with an interest in performing wildlife management work for hire. Training will focus on restoring natural communities and wildlife species that depend on early-successional habitat. This includes bobwhite quail, cottontail rabbits and songbirds.

Sessions are scheduled for:

- ▲ Feb. 16 in Cape Girardeau
- ▲ Feb. 21 in Springfield
- ▲ Feb. 23 in Clinton
- ▲ Feb. 28 in West Plains
- ▲ March 3 in Jefferson City
- ▲ March 7 in St. Louis
- ▲ March 14 in Cameron
- ▲ March 16 in Macon

Pre-registration is required. For more information, call MO-AG, 573/636-6130 or the Conservation Department's Private Land Services Division, 573/751-4115.

In many cases, landowners can receive reimbursement for wildlife contractors' wages under programs sponsored by the Federal Farm Bill, the Conservation Department and private conservation groups. This makes it practical for landowners to hire out work. You can find contractors who already provide wildlife-management services at *www.mdc.mo.gov/cgi-bin/mdcdevpub/apps/contactsnonmdc/main.cgi*.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting	open	close
Coyotes	5/9/05	3/31/06
Crow	11/1/05	3/3/06
Furbearers	11/15/05	2/15/06
Rabbits	10/1/05	2/15/06
Squirrels	5/28/05	2/15/06
Turkey		
Youth resident only	4/8/06	4/9/06
Spring	4/24/06	5/14/06
Light Goose Conservation Order		please see the *Waterfowl Hunting Digest*
or see *www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/wtrfowl/info/seasons*		

Fishing		
Black Bass (certain Ozark streams)	5/28/05	2/28/06
impoundments and other streams year round		
Bullfrog	sunset 6/30/06	midnight 10/31/06
Nongame fish snagging	3/15/06	5/15/06
Paddlefish	3/15/06	4/30/06
Paddlefish on the Mississippi River	3/15/06	5/15/06
Trout Parks		
catch and release (Fri.–Sun. & daily at Maramec spring)	11/11/05	2/12/06

Trapping		
Beaver	11/15/05	3/31/06
Furbearers	11/15/05	2/15/06
Otters and Muskrats	11/15/05	varies
see regulations for otter zones season dates and limits		

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of "Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations" and "Missouri Fishing Regulations," the "Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information," the "Waterfowl Hunting Digest" and the "Migratory Bird Hunting Digest." This information is on our Web site at *www.missouriconservation.org/regs/* and at permit vendors.

The Conservation Department's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800/392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to *www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/*.



OPERATION GAME THIEF
1-800-392-1111

St. Louis boat show Feb. 7–12

The St. Louis America's Center will host the 52nd Annual St. Louis Boat and Sport Show Feb. 7 through 12, featuring boats, engines, marine accessories, hunting and fishing gear and vacation destinations. Seminars and guest speakers will appeal to every age and interest.

Other attractions this year include a turkey-calling and owl-hooting workshop/contest, a Becky Thatcher Trout Pond, Travelin' Fish Tank, a live snake and lizard exhibit and Bassmaster Kids Casting Competition. Hours are 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday, 2 to 10 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, noon to 10 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is $8 for adults, $2 for children 6 through 12. Children 12 and under are free Friday if accompanied by adults. Further information is available at *www.stlouisboatshow.com*.



To learn about bobwhite quail management and Missouri's quail recovery efforts, check out
www.missouriconservation.org
Keyword: quail

AGENT NOTEBOOK



Just prior to the opening of the November portion of the firearms deer season, I had discovered some corn scattered on the ground. My district supervisor and I decided to investigate the apparent bait site early the first morning of the season. Both of us had put on our blaze orange caps and vests and started off through the woods toward the site.

As we were walking through some dense cover a deer jumped up not far in front of us. The deer had been wounded, and it took off through the brush.

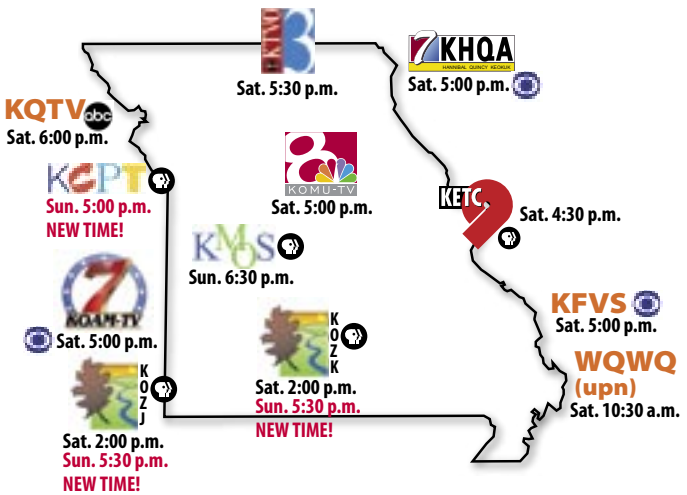
We continued on to the bait site and made contact with a hunter in a tree stand near it. A short time later, when visiting with some of the other hunters on the property, a woman in the group told us she had shot and wounded a deer earlier that morning. The woman said she later saw the wounded deer moving through some thick brush, but she didn't take another shot because she saw some glimpses of blaze orange in the woods beyond her target.

Needless to say, those glimpses of blaze orange were my district supervisor and me. I thanked and praised the woman several times for being a safe and responsible hunter and for practicing good firearms and hunting safety.

This incident could have had a different outcome had we not been wearing blaze orange garments. It certainly shows the value of wearing blaze orange when out hunting and really emphasizes the importance of this regulation. The main reason conservation agents strictly enforce the requirement to wear blaze orange is because it saves lives. —*Roger Peecher, Sullivan County*

Program Schedule

Television the way Nature intended!



SHOW SCHEDULE

Feb. 4 & 5—*WOMEN IN NATURE*
Discover programs in outdoor skills and education.

Feb. 11 & 12—*TRAPPING*
See how the role of trappers has changed over the years.

Feb. 18 & 19—*WATER & LIGHT 2*
The scenic beauty of natural Missouri is captured in a special music video.

Feb. 25 & 26—*CONSERVATION PAYS*
From hunting and fishing to hiking and birdwatching ... see how conservation pays its own way in Missouri.

March 4 & 5—*TURKEY HUNT*
Just Kiddin' Around—Join the fun and excitement as young hunters venture out during spring turkey season.

OTHER OUTLETS (Previously aired episodes are also shown on the following)

Blue Springs CTV7
Brentwood BTV-10 Brentwood City Television
Columbia Columbia Channel
Hillsboro JCTV
Independence City 7 Cable
Joplin KGCS
Kearney Unite Cable
Parkville GATV
Perryville PVTV
Platte City Unite Cable
Poplar Bluff Poplar Bluff City Cable
Ste. Genevieve Ste. Genevieve Cable
St. Charles SC20 City Cable
St. Louis Charter Cable
St. Louis Cooperating Schools Cable
St. Louis City TV 10
St. Peters St. Peters Cable
Springfield KBLE36/MediaCom
Sullivan Fidelity Cable
West Plains OCTV

Meet Our Contributors



Veronica Feilner has over 20 years of experience in education, including four years at the Department of Conservation, where she is currently serving as an outreach & education coordinator. She loves gardening with her husband, Ron, in rural Boone County and deer hunting and fishing with family.



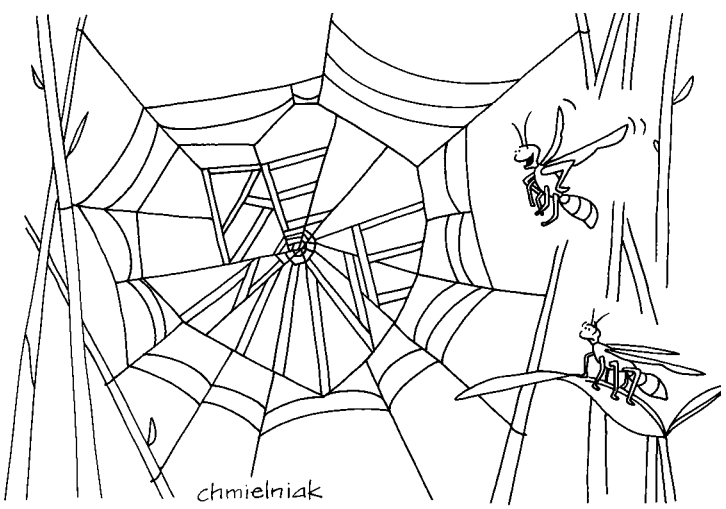
Robert W. Fluchel, Discovery Center manager, has been involved with the development of the Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center in Kansas City since its inception. He understands city kids because he once was one. He grew up in St. Louis in the 1950s. Bob is a 20-year veteran of the Department.



Nichole LeClair holds degrees in journalism and conservation biology. She is thrilled to finally indulge both interests as managing editor for the *Conservationist*. Ever looking for an excuse to play outside, she most enjoys camping, hiking, canoeing, fishing and hunting. Canids have always fascinated her.



Rex Martensen is a 15-year MDC employee who worked in Fisheries and Protection Divisions before filling his current role as field program supervisor for the Private Land Services Division. Rex resides in Moniteau County with his wife, Cindy, and five children. He enjoys fishing and all types of hunting.



"Is she advertising for a Valentine or for a meal?"



Youth Hunter

An immature bald eagle takes off in pursuit of a snow goose meal. Bald eagles develop the white head and tail of adulthood at 3 to 4 years of age. Large numbers of bald eagles winter in Missouri, and about 100 pairs nest here during summer. —*Noppadol Paothong*.